

Reflection from the Superior General

Today we celebrate Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. We are also celebrating the charism of Religious Life at the heart of the Church. Through our prayerful celebration today we are invited into a deeper commitment to our own Marist vocation.

Simeon and Anna (Lk. 2: 22 – 38) live and breathe a life of prayer, both personal and liturgical, and they invite others into that faith-filled life. When Joseph and Mary and their child are invited into Simeon and Anna's prayer, these parents from Nazareth are surprised by the words they hear and they are jolted into a deeper understanding of their own special call. Religious men and women in the Church, like Simeon and Anna before us, are called to search for God by our way of prayer – both personal and liturgical - and to accompany others as they discern God working in their lives. The fundamental call to be men and women who pray in the heart of the Church will

never change for Religious. We share our prayer lives with others, especially in the Eucharist and the Prayer of the Church, or whenever we dedicate some time to pray with others, including our prayers of blessing.

Simeon takes Jesus into his arms and prays: "Now you let your servant go in peace according to your promise". Simeon is at a turning point in his life that involves letting go of his old ways and facing into the future with hope. His prayer includes peacefully and joyfully facing his own mortality and also trusting there will be new life with Jesus the Saviour. We Religious are being asked to let go of so many places and

cherished activities that once gave us life, whether personally or institutionally. At the same time we trust in the Lord that new life will grow in new and surprising ways. The "nunc dimittis" we pray every Compline frees us both to pass into the night and to anticipate the new light of dawn.

For Simeon, the salvation offered in the Christ child will bring light to all the peoples. His broad horizons include all people, even the gentiles. Our horizons as Religious, too, need to keep expanding. As Pope Francis often says: the Church welcomes "todos, todos, todos".

Mary hears from holy Simeon "that a sword will pierce her own heart". Her future will include great suffering but, united with that of Christ on the cross, her suffering shares in the redeeming suffering of Christ her Son. Religious too, when we live our lives authentically, never settle for comfortable, bland and easy ways. We fully accept that there will be crosses to carry. Swords pierce our hearts, too. Our sufferings and those of our people, embraced with faith, share in the saving grace of Christ.

We Marists rejoice today that four young men are professing their first vows as Religious in the Society of Mary. Twelve other young men are preparing to enter the novitiate in Davao in the Philippines. We pray for and with them. We also rejoice with many confreres who are celebrating Profession anniversaries today. Ad multos annos!

A blessed celebration of Marist Religious Life today, the Feast of the Lord's Presentation!

John Larsen s.m.

